

# DERCUM (F.X.)

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## A CASE OF SPORADIC CRETINISM.

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CASES of cretinism are always interesting, especially in this country, where the disease is so infrequently met with. Further, it is not improbable that the disease is, in the less typical cases, every now and then mistaken for rachitis, and *vice versa*. The study of the following case will therefore be of some value.

Cases in which the individual remains during his entire life infantile, both in size and in mental development, are very easy of recognition. Such, for instance, is the case of little "Bartie M.," who is so familiar to the visitors of the Philadelphia Hospital, and is at present under the care of my colleague, Dr. Mills. It is, however, in the cases in which a greater development, both physically and mentally, takes place, that the stunted growth is likely to be attributed to rickets.

In the case before us (see cut), the past history is derived from a rather unsatisfactory source,—the patient himself. It is brief and of doubtful value.

W. H., male, gives his age at one time as thirty-five, at another as forty-seven. Says that he was born in Philadelphia, and when asked his occupation says that he has "helped a huckster." He cannot give the nativity of his father or mother. Says that both are dead; says that he has three brothers and a sister, and that they are strong and well, likewise asserting the same of himself.

Further, he tells us that he had the dropsy when a little boy, and also the chicken-pox, which he claims destroyed his left eye. States also that he has never been in the hospital before, though this is clearly the fourth time that he has made his appearance.

He was admitted to the out-wards two weeks previous to his admission to the nervous department. He stated that he had been "kicked by a horse in the stomach," that his stomach had "swelled out," and that he had been unable to pass his water. This story was doubted, as he presented absolutely no symptoms of injury, had no pain, and was apparently quite comfortable in every way.

The following physical peculiarities were noted: In stature he was decidedly dwarfed, being but four feet five inches in height. The trunk was relatively long, the limbs—more especially the thighs—being relatively short. The chest is broad

and flat, the abdomen large, relaxed, and distended. The forearms and legs are thick. The distal ends of the bones in both legs are distinctly enlarged. The hands are unusually broad and the fingers thick. The feet are broad and quite flat. His gait is peculiar in that the feet are raised with a side-wise swing, and that there is an awkward rocking to and fro as he walks. The nails also are quite broad and flat.

The head is large; the face broad, especially across the malar region; the hair is a dark brown, dense and thick, and grows low down over the forehead. The eyes are widely separated; the nose is short; the root of the nose being much depressed, while its end is broad, flattened, and much turned up. The cheek-bones are large and prominent, while the jaw is short, small, and relatively undeveloped.

The face is much wrinkled, being marked by transverse furrows across the brow, by deep creases below the eyes and over the malar bones, and to either side of the alæ of the nose and mouth. As a whole, the face looks œdematous and puffy, while its color is a dirty yellowish white. The ears are large and stand out from the head to an unusual degree.

The neck is thick, puffy, and excessively wrinkled where it joins the skin about the jaw. Above either clavicle is found a soft swelling, more marked on the right side. No thyroid gland can be felt.

The back presents in the lumbar region an excessive lordosis. In addition to the anterior curvature there is also a slight flexion to the left. The left shoulder is slightly lower than the right.

The skin as a whole is of a dirty yellowish hue, and everywhere, especially in the small of the back, in the neighborhood of the joints and over the hands, is excessively wrinkled. It feels harsh, dry, very rough, and thick. In some places, as over the hands and forehead, it feels as though loosely attached to the parts below; at others, as over the chest, abdomen, and thighs, a soft subdermal tissue appears to be present.

There is a small moustache, and the genitalia appear well developed. Inquiries as to sexual power resulted negatively.

The muscles appeared fairly developed, while the knee-jerks were slightly exaggerated.

Mentally the patient is at the level of a middle-grade idiot. Thought and apprehension are very slow. His speech is thick and likewise slow. The consonants are not distinctly enunciated, and the intonation, as a whole, resembles that of a young boy. In early life an attempt appears to have been made to teach him to read and write, but it was evidently unsuccessful.





